

14. HALF FARE

BASIC REQUIREMENT

Grantees must ensure that elderly persons and persons with disabilities, or an individual presenting a Medicare card will be charged, during non-peak hours for transportation using or involving a facility or equipment of a project financed under Section 5307, not more than 50 percent of the peak hour fare.

AREAS TO BE EXAMINED

1. *Half Fare During Non-Peak Hours*

The grantee must offer a non-peak-hour fare for elderly persons and persons with disabilities that is no greater than one-half of the fare generally applicable to others during peak hours.

2. *Half Fare for Persons with a Medicare Card*

The half-fare requirements of the Federal Transit Act apply to any person

presenting a Medicare card duly issued to that person pursuant to Title II or XVIII of the Social Security Act.

REFERENCES

1. [49 USC Chapter 53](#), Federal Transit Laws,, as amended by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users ([SAFETEA-LU](#)).
2. [49 CFR Part 609](#), "Transportation for Elderly and Handicapped Persons."
3. [FTA Circular 9030.1C](#), "Urbanized Area Formula Program: Grant Application Instructions."

QUESTIONS FOR THE REVIEW

1. *Does the grantee, during the off-peak hours, allow elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and persons with a Medicare card to pay one-half the fare generally paid during the peak hours? What is the full fare? What is the fare for E&PWD/Medicare? During what hours are half fares available (all hours or off-peak hours only)? Are there any services not included in the half-fare program?*

EXPLANATION

Urbanized Area Formula Program (Section 5307) grantees must allow 1) elderly persons, 2) persons with disabilities, and 3) Medicare cardholders to ride fixed route services during the off-peak hours for a fare that is not more than one-half the base fare charged other persons during the peak hours.

The fares charged to elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and Medicare cardholders cannot exceed one-half the fare that is charged for the same trip during the peak hours. If there are services such as neighborhood circulator and shuttle services with fares that are different from the grantee's fare for its regular local service, separate half fares are needed for each type of service. The reviewer needs to verify that the amount is not higher than fifty percent of the peak hour fare for each type of service.

The reviewer should verify that half fares are available on all required services. The requirement is applicable to:

- all fixed-route services (including route deviation services and service to sporting events) that operate in both peak and off-peak hours and use or involve facilities and equipment financed with Section 5307 funds, whether the services are provided by the grantee directly, by a contractor, or by another entity that leases facilities and/or equipment from the grantee
- any express and commuter routes that operate trips beyond the peak hours.

This requirement is not applicable to:

- demand responsive services that are open to the general public;
- services that operate only during peak hours, such as express and commuter routes;

- services that operate only in the off-peak hours (e.g., lunchtime circulators and weekend routes to sporting events).

If the grantee limits half fares to off-peak hours, the reviewer should verify that the definition of "off-peak" is reasonable. For example, if the grantee has both peak and off-peak fares in its overall fare structure, the off-peak time periods for the general public and the half fare program should be defined consistently. "Elderly" by FTA regulations is to "at a minimum, include all persons 65 year of age or over." Grantees are permitted to use a definition that extends this fare to younger (e.g., 62 and over, or 60 and over) persons. Persons with disabilities are defined by FTA as persons "who by reason of illness, injury, age, congenital malfunction, or other incapacity or temporary or permanent disability (including any individual who is a wheelchair user or has semi-ambulatory capabilities), cannot use effectively, without special facilities, planning, or design, mass transportation service or a mass transportation facility."

The definition of Medicare cardholder is self-explanatory. This is a distinct half-fare requirement, though many grantees choose to use a Medicare card as proof of eligibility for the elderly and persons with disabilities half fare (see questions and discussion below). Though most Medicare cardholders are elderly (age 65 or older), it is important to recognize that Medicare cards can be issued to non-elderly persons with a disability. A Medicare card can be issued to anyone under 65 years of age who has received Social Security or Railroad Retirement Board disability benefits for 24 months or is a kidney dialysis or kidney transplant patient. The reviewer should make sure the grantee has not limited acceptance of a Medicare card to seniors only.

REASON FOR THE QUESTION

[49 USC Chapter 53](#), Section 5307 (d)(1)(D)

[49 CFR 609.23](#)

[FTA C 9030.1C](#), Ch. V, Sections 5.f and 5.g

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The basic sources of information are the grantee's general public information that presents its fare structure. Common examples are the system map, pocket timetables, and signs within the system (e.g., decals on fareboxes, signs in stations, and car cards on vehicles). Other sources are brochures describing the fare structure and the reduced fare program, and application forms for the reduced fare program or special ID cards. Documents such as fare policies/tariffs and internal policy memoranda may describe

the program. The grantee's web site also may have fare information.

DETERMINATION

If the grantee offers half fares during off-peak hours on all required services, offers half fares during the off-peak that are equal to or less than one-half the full fare during the peak hours, has a program that defines elderly and persons with disabilities consistent with the minimums established by FTA, and offers half fares to Medicare cardholders, the grantee is not deficient. Many grantees extend the program to all hours of service, which exceeds the requirement and is not deficient.

If the grantee is charging more than one-half the peak hour fare during off-peak hours, it is deficient. If the grantee has not provided a half fare for a service that should be included, it is deficient.

SUGGESTED CORRECTIVE ACTION

If the grantee does not have a half-fare program during non-peak hours on all of its applicable services, the corrective action is to implement such a program immediately. If the fare is more than one-half the full fare, the grantee must determine how it will come into compliance. FTA will not tell a grantee how to revise its fares. Since changing fares will require a public hearing and possible Board action, the grantee will be asked to provide a plan and schedule for correcting its half fare program.

2. *Is an identification card required at time of boarding in order to obtain the half fare? If yes, what type of card is accepted onboard? What are the procedures to obtain the special ID card? Does the grantee require any additional information from a Medicare cardholder?*

EXPLANATION

The half fare program, as applied, may require passengers to show proof of eligibility when they pay their fare in order to receive the half fare. The reviewer should identify the types of identification that are accepted (e.g., Medicare card, special identification card, ADA eligibility card). All are permissible. The grantee may require more than one piece of identification for determining age or disability-related qualifications.

A grantee may require passengers to obtain a special identification card as the sole basis for paying the half fare. A valid Medicare card must be considered sufficient proof of eligibility for obtaining such a reduced fare card.

In order to ensure that the person presenting a Medicare card is the authorized individual, there may be a request for additional proof of identity (i.e., another card with a photograph). There is no specific prohibition against this, provided the grantee is not asking for further proof of eligibility from the Medicare cardholder but is only checking the validity of the Medicare card.

Obtaining a special half fare card must be relatively easy. For example, requiring individuals to travel to a single office, which may be inconveniently located, is not consistent with the intent of this requirement, though not strictly prohibited. The reviewer should discuss these procedures with the grantee staff to ascertain if the program is implemented properly.

REASON FOR THE QUESTION

[49 USC Chapter 53](#), Section 5307 (d)(1)(D)

[49 CFR 609.23](#)

[FTA C 9030.1C](#), Ch. V, Sections 5.f and 5.g

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Public informational materials (described above) and application materials for special identification cards should be reviewed for a description of the process and the identification necessary to qualify for half fare.

DETERMINATION

If the location(s) for obtaining a special card are not accessible by transit, open during convenient hours, and publicized, the grantee's program is deficient.

If the Medicare card is accepted as the basis for payment of half fare or as a means to obtain a special identification card, the grantee is not deficient. If the Medicare card is not acceptable in this way, the grantee is deficient. If the grantee requires more than a Medicare card as proof of eligibility for half fares, it is deficient.

SUGGESTED CORRECTIVE ACTION

The grantee should take steps to ensure passengers are aware of any need for a special identification card, and make sure that the identification cards can be easily obtained. A Medicare card must be accepted as proof of eligibility for the half fare program.

3. *How has the grantee informed its employees, the employees of any contractors and lessees, and the public that these half fares are available? Do the grantee's internal and external materials describing fares show: an E&PWD Half Fare? that Medicare cardholders are eligible for half fares?*

EXPLANATION

A policy is not effective unless it is communicated to those who can take advantage of it and to those who will carry it out. These questions verify that the program is publicized properly. The reviewer should look at both external and internal materials. Internal materials include training documents and communication with drivers and others responsible for implementing the fare. These should demonstrate that the grantee has notified the staff of the program and included the correct information. External materials refer to readily available public information. Half-fare information, including Medicare eligibility, should be included in these materials, if they contain fare information. For example, if a brochure says the fare to ride the bus is \$1.00, it also should say that the fare for elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and Medicare cardholders is \$0.50 during off-peak hours.

A grantee is expected to have a fare structure that offers half fares to 1) elderly persons, 2) persons with disabilities, and 3) Medicare cardholders. The grantee's public information should include half-fare information if it includes full-fare information. The half-fare information should include evidence of a Medicare card half-fare program and evidence of a half-fare program for elderly persons and persons with disabilities. Though it is not necessary to have a separate fare category for Medicare cardholders, the grantee's readily available public information should be clear that Medicare cards are accepted as proof of eligibility for the half fare program.

REASON FOR THE QUESTION

[49 USC Chapter 53](#), Section 5307(d)(1)(D)
[49 CFR 609.23](#)
[FTA C 9030.1C](#), Ch. V, Sections 5.f and 5.g

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

System maps, route timetables, general system fare brochures, communication with the drivers (e.g., driver bulletins), and communication with other employees provide the basic sources of information. The reviewer should check common public information items, such as the system map, timetables, brochures, web site, station signs and farebox decals to see that they include the proper information (the existence of a half-fare program for elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and Medicare cardholders).

DETERMINATION

If the grantee publicizes the half-fare requirements along with full fare information and has informed drivers and other responsible individuals of the policy, it is not deficient. Half fare information needs to be readily available to passengers.

The grantee is not required to publish fare information. But, if the grantee publishes fare information, it must include half-fare information. For example, if schedules contain fare information but have incomplete or no half-fare information, the grantee is deficient. If some half-fare information is included, but Medicare eligibility is not mentioned, the grantee is deficient.

SUGGESTED CORRECTIVE ACTION

The grantee must make complete information on the half-fare program available where fare information is presented. Information must be provided on the fares for elderly persons and persons with disabilities and on the availability of those fares to Medicare cardholders. If any of this information has been omitted from the grantee's readily available public information items (e.g., maps and timetables, or web site), the grantee must revise the text the next time these materials are reprinted/updated. If materials for drivers and other operating personnel do not convey the current program requirements, the materials must be updated.

Discuss with the grantee if it is planning to republish the item that needs correcting and arrive at a schedule for completing the corrective action. Grantees can be given up to 365 days to complete these changes. In the interim, an assurance that the changes will be made and sample text can be requested.